

**UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL EDUCATION ALTERNATIVE ROUTES TO LICENSURE**

*Frequently Asked Questions*

**General Information Regarding the USOE Alternative Routes to Licensure**

**1. *Why does the USOE offer Alternative Routes to Licensure (USOE ARL)?***

A continuing shortage of qualified special education teachers exists in Utah and nationwide. One reason for this shortage is that traditional special education teacher preparation programs at colleges and universities do not have enrollments that can keep pace with the increasing needs for licensed special educators in school districts and charter schools.

USOE developed its alternative routes to licensure as one answer to this challenge. The USOE Alternative Routes to Licensure is a cooperative effort between Utah colleges/universities, participating Local Education Agencies, and the Utah State Office of Education.

**2. *How is the USOE ARL different than a traditional university special education teacher preparation program?***

The goal of either a traditional or alternative teacher preparation program is to produce competent special educators. The primary difference between a traditional teacher preparation program and the USOE ARL is that this alternative approach requires academic coursework taken concurrently while the individual is working in a special education setting.

**3. *Which LEAs are eligible to participate in the USOE ARL?***

At the present time all Utah districts and charter schools are eligible. Contact information is available at <http://www.schools.utah.gov/sars/directory/pdfs/speddirectors.pdf> and <http://www.schools.utah.gov/charterschools/directory.htm>

**4. *What endorsements are available through the ARL?***

Mild/Moderate, Severe, Hearing Impaired, and Visually Impaired endorsements are available.

**Program Expectations**

**5. *What are the basic requirements that I must meet?***

- You must have a bachelor's degree.
- You need to be hired to teach in an approved special education setting by a participating LEA.

**6. *What does it take to be successful in the program?***

Key personal qualities that immediately come to mind are: time management, hard work, focus, commitment, a positive attitude, and the ability to adapt and accept feedback.

**7. *Is the program rigorous?***

Yes. Anytime an individual takes on a new and probably unfamiliar job **and** is registered as essentially a full-time college student, the challenges are great. In addition to assuming the responsibilities of the new job as a special education teacher (with limited background knowledge associated with being a special education teacher), there are application assignments to complete, textbooks to read, tests to study for, and classes to attend.

**8. *What support am I provided during the time I am enrolled in ARL?***

Because this is a collaborative program between USOE and participating LEAs, structured support is built into the program to help you with your first year as a special educator.

- The course instructors are highly qualified and available to problem solve concerns and offer suggestions on how to apply the coursework to your day-to-day teaching assignment.
- Through your district, you will be assigned a cooperating teacher who is a master teacher. Your cooperating teacher will be expected to (1) provide you with feedback on assignments prior to turning them in, (2) do regularly scheduled observations of your teaching, and (3) be available to help you navigate through school- and district-level expectations and procedures.
- If you are hired by a charter school, you will be assigned a mentor either through your schools or the USOE Special Education Department. Your mentor will be expected to (1) provide you with feedback on assignments prior to turning them in, (2) do regularly scheduled observations of your teaching, and (3) be available to help you navigate through school- and district-level expectations and procedures.
- Your district special education department will provide additional trainings and teacher specialists who will be available to provide ongoing support.
- The USOE Special Education Department will provide additional trainings and teacher specialists who will be available to provide ongoing support through monthly Charter School Roundtables.

**Financial Expectations and Obligations**

**9. *Is there financial assistance available?***

LEAs **DO NOT** provide stipends or reimbursements for tuition or textbooks for students enrolled in this program.

If hired by a LEA through an ARL you are eligible to apply for financial assistance through State and Federal programs.

<http://www.schools.utah.gov/cert/PEJEP/default.htm> You may also apply for student loans

You may also independently search and apply for scholarships and/or grants. If information becomes available regarding scholarships and/or grants that students may be eligible for, LEAs or course instructors will share the information with students.

## **District Procedures and Expectations**

### **10. *Do I apply for admission to the USOE Alternative Routes to Licensure before being hired by a LEA?***

No. It is imperative that prospective students first be hired by a participating LEA in an approved special education setting. Prospective students need to adhere to district/charter school hiring procedures when applying for a position.

### **11. *What factors do LEAs use to determine which interested candidates to interview?***

LEAs have an obligation to fill vacancies with qualified candidates. When vacancies in a LEA are greater than the number of certified candidates, LEAs then begin to hire individuals who will participate in an alternative route to licensure.

When a vacancy becomes available in a LEA, the following will be considered: (1) your responses to interview questions, (2) your prior experience with either teaching or working with school-age youth, (3) academic history and record, and (4) references.

### **12. *When should I start applying for positions?***

Contact LEAs starting March 1 of each year for available positions in the upcoming school year. We also recommend that you use the website <http://www.teachers-teachers.com/utah/>.

### **13. *How long does it take to complete an ARL in Special Education?***

It normally takes between one and two years to complete all the requirements for an ARL. However, you are given three years to complete the ARL requirements.

### **14. *Am I required to take a PRAXIS exam?***

Yes. Effective July 1, 2005 all educators must pass a PRAXIS exam to demonstrate competency.